Advisory Council on Heritage Property

Nova Scotia

ANNUAL REPORT

for the fiscal year ended march 31, 1982

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The purpose of the Heritage Property Act is to provide for the identification, designation, preservation, protection and rehabilitation of buildings, streetscapes and areas of historical, architectural or cultural value and to encourage their continued use.

HISTORY

The year ending March 31, 1982 marked the first year that the Heritage Property Act was in effect. Passed by the House of Assembly on May 24, 1980, and assented to by the Lieutenant-Governor on June 5, 1980, the Act was assigned to the Honourable Greg Kerr, then Minister of Culture, Recreation and Fitness. It was proclaimed, with the exception of Section 20, on August 15, 1980.

As of December 15, 1981 the Minister of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Fitness is the Honourable R. Fisher Hudson, Q.C. A heritage staff of three — an Administrative Officer and two casual positions — were established within the Department.

SPECIFICATION

The Act provides for two levels of responsibility in the area of heritage property preservation: provincial and municipal. In concurrence with the Act the Minister must, and each municipality may, establish a Registry upon which selected properties may be placed to come under the specific arrangements of the Act.

The Minister receives recommendations from a Ministerial Advisory Council on Heritage Property and each municipality receives recommendations from a local Advisory Committee on Heritage Property, established under a by-law approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Once buildings are included in the Registry of Heritage Property, applications for changes to any registered property must be referred to the appropriate advisory group. Such applications are received by the Governor-in-Council provincially and by the Municipal Council municipally.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

In order to ensure a balance of viewpoints, the first members of the Advisory Council to the Minister were selected to represent the business, investment and professional interests of the community. Individuals informed and dedicated to the preservation of heritage

property, those versed in legal terminology, and those representing government views were all included on the first Council.

Members of the first Advisory Council were: Commander Evan Petley-Jones, (retired); Louis Stephen, Deputy Minister, Department of Culture, Recreation and Fitness; Gordon Thompson and George Piercey, Halifax businessmen; Elizabeth Ross, Executive Director of the Federation of Nova Scotian Heritage; Charles MacIntosh, a lawyer with the Council of Maritime Premiers; Dr. Robert Morgan, Director of the Beaton Institute of Cape Breton Studies at the College of Cape Breton; and Tom Forrestall, Nova Scotia artist. Commander Evan Petley-Jones was appointed Chairman of the Council by the Minister with Louis Stephen as Vice-Chairman.

Ten meetings were held during the year.

ADMINISTRATION

The council's first task was to determine its own guidelines. Once these guidelines received Ministerial approval, the Council proceeded to adopt criteria to be used in deciding which properties should be recommended for registration to the Minister responsible for the Act.

In some other jurisdictions such criteria have taken the form of rating systems, scored numerically against a series of considerations. After careful deliberation and consultation a set of criteria depending on more discussion and judgment was adopted for use in Nova Scotia.

HERITAGE SURVEY 1981

Properties with potential to be designated under the Heritage Property Act come to the attention of the Council either through inquiries made to the Minister or Council members or through staff work, particularly as the result of surveys done by summer workers and overseen by the Minister's heritage staff.

Surveys conducted during the summer of 1981 were primarily concerned with properties in Sydney, Antigonish County and the Annapolis Valley. A major concern during these surveys was the extent to which the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings (CIHB) procedures and forms could be used under the Nova Scotia Act. In order to orient the 16 surveyors to CIHB methods, they participated in a three-day training session. Guidance was provided from CIHB instructors and their forms and procedures were followed during the survey.

Because of the potential influence which builders and local history itself have upon the Council's ultimate decisions concerning designation, additional information was recorded that would not easily fit into the computerized CIHB format. The conclusion drawn from the 1981 survey was that the results should be fed to the federal system but that forms and procedures specific to Nova Scotia's interests should be developed.

IDENTIFICATION AND PROPERTY EVALUATION

However a property comes to the attention of the Advisory Council, it must be individually assessed on grounds of age, architectural merit, rarity, historical and personal association, and local interest. Some of this research is carried out by staff, some by contracted researchers. The buildings in question are examined, photographed and recorded; titles are searched; and persons and events associated with the property are checked out. Memories as well as records are sought and noted.

In most cases, comparative information is needed. This is not always easy to attain, and the need for comprehensive surveys and background theme papers is keenly felt. Investigation of Nova Scotia's buildings should result in the writing of much mercantile, industrial and ethnic history that has simply been overlooked. Background papers have commenced and the preliminary one on *Architects and Builders in Nova Scotia* has confirmed the need for this basic research.

To date, 46 properties have come to the Advisory Council for consideration and have been studied in detail. Of these, a number have been recommended to the Minister for inclusion in the Provincial Registry.

MUNICIPALITIES

Municipalities have also taken action under the Act. Fifteen have passed by-laws and have appointed Advisory Committees. These committees are now in the process of adopting criteria and considering properties for inclusion in local heritage registries. The Department of Municipal Affairs and the Minister's staff have cooperated in advising municipalities.

Two municipalities in particular did a great deal of work before the Act was passed; the City of Halifax and Town of Annapolis Royal placed numerous properties on their respective registers.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Other agencies active in the area of heritage preservation include the Department of Development with its Main Street Programme, the Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage with active membership throughout the province, the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia (the oldest provincial society devoted to building preservation) and the Heritage Canada Foundation.

CONCLUSION

The Advisory Council is particularly aware of the need to encourage people, as individuals and as members of associations, societies, and corporations, to take the preservation of heritage seriously. It is also concerned with the future use and fate of the buildings that will eventually be registered.